

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Module Six

Standard 5: Support and Development

Standard 5: Support and Development

Objective:

To identify Standard 5 Criteria and Evidence, the importance of supporting and developing employees, how to strengthen your volunteer training and resources, and promote the National Standards across your organisation.



Standard 5: Support and Development

“Culture is about performance, and making people feel good about how they contribute to the whole” – Tracy Streckenbach.

What is Standard 5?

Volunteers can only accomplish so much without the proper support and development resources they need. Your support can compound theirs, bringing high returns for both your organisation's and volunteers' goals.

Standard 5 creates a set of guidelines to help volunteers understand their roles and access the knowledge, skills, and feedback necessary to fulfil their responsibilities safely and successfully. To strategically support and develop your volunteers, you must ensure that your organisation has processes in place to equip them with all that they need to perform their roles well. Meeting this Standard will enable your organisation to provide the orientation training, skills development, and ongoing support required to ensure that your volunteers make a positive impact.

In short? Standard 5 ensures that volunteers have the support, training, and knowledge they need in order to succeed.

Standard 5 Criteria

Volunteering Australia prescribes five Criteria that measure how well an organisation supports and develops its volunteers. These include:

1. Orientation
2. Identify Support and Development Needs
3. Relevant Roles, Training, and Development
4. Supervision and Support
5. Change Procedures

Why is Standard 5 So Important?

Volunteers dedicate their time and energy to making a difference in their communities. Their support is critical to an organisation's success. Yet, to access their support, you must support them. Volunteers are a valuable asset. As such, you must invest in them by providing the resources they need. Orientation, ongoing training, and policies can establish the clear expectations, support, and development that volunteers need to perform their roles effectively.

We can learn more about this by understanding the impact of employee training and development. Let's look at some findings from a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2021:

- Employee retention rates increase by 30-50% at organisations with a comprehensive training program.
- 94% of employees who left an organisation would have stayed longer if they felt that the organisation had invested in their development.
- More than half of employees claim their organisation provides them with no formal training for their positions.

While these numbers refer to employees, they can equally apply to volunteers, as investing in volunteer training is, in effect, investing in their retention and abilities. Orientation not only makes them more effective volunteers, but it encourages them to become long-term partners.

Research shows us that volunteers are 66% more likely to donate to an organisation they volunteer for. If you advocate for their success, they'll advocate for yours.



Criteria 5.1

ORIENTATION

Orientation is a critical element of preparing volunteers for their roles. Every volunteer should receive a comprehensive orientation to the organisation, its values, goals, and objectives, as well as to the duties they will perform. Volunteers need to understand the relevant rules, policies, and procedures pertaining to their role to avoid miscommunication or confusion.

Orientation sets the tone for a positive volunteer experience. It helps to ensure that a volunteer is aware of, and involved in, your organisation's mission. Think of orientation as leaving a great first impression on your volunteers: welcome them with the resources they need to feel confident and excited to keep working with you.

“Volunteers are provided with orientation relevant to their role and responsibility”

– Volunteering Australia.





Evidence 5.1: Checklist

Let's review the current volunteer orientation practices within your organisation, using the Evidence provided by Volunteering Australia to guide you. Pinpoint strengths and weaknesses by ranking your efforts on a scale of 1 to 5:



“Orientation requirements for all volunteer roles are documented and implemented.”

Does your organisation offer orientation for volunteers? If so, is this orientation unique to each volunteer role, or is it generalised? Is the orientation process documented for consistency? Do Volunteer Managers refer to, and implement, the processes found in these documents?

A volunteer answering phone calls behind a desk is going to have an entirely different experience than a volunteer working one-on-one with your clients. Each role should have customised orientation requirements. These requirements should be documented and referred to by Volunteer Managers for consistent, comprehensive results.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)



“Volunteer orientation includes information about the organisation, their role and how it contributes to the organisation's goals and objectives.”

Does your volunteer orientation provide an overview of your organisation and its purpose? Does it brief volunteers on the responsibilities and duties of their specific roles? And lastly, do you connect the dots by sharing how their role supports your organisation's overarching mission?

Volunteer orientation should paint the bigger picture of your cause, and position where each volunteer fits into it. Set clear expectations from Day 1 by providing volunteers with the context of how their role contributes to the cause.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Evidence 5.1: Checklist



“Volunteers are made aware of their rights and responsibilities related to the role and to the organisation.”

Is the volunteer made aware of their rights when working with your organisation during orientation? Do they leave orientation with confidence, knowing what responsibilities and duties they hold?

Volunteering Australia provides volunteers with a checklist of rights, which include:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment,
 - Insurance coverage,
 - Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses,
- and more... All of which should be included in your volunteer orientation.

Clarity is the key to training confident and capable volunteers. It's important to review each volunteer's responsibilities, as they pertain to their role.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Volunteers understand and agree to a code of conduct and/or rights and responsibilities statement.”

Just as you commit to support your volunteers, your volunteers must commit to supporting your cause. Do you have a code of conduct for your volunteers? Do you have a rights and responsibilities statement they must agree to?

Ensure a Volunteer Manager shares your organisation's code of conduct or statement for new volunteers.

Find a way to gain volunteer consent and agreement, whether it's through a contract, signature, or another method.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Relevant policies, such as reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, are explained to volunteers.”

Does your organisation have relevant policies that support your volunteers' rights? Are these policies communicated to your volunteers during orientation?

All relevant volunteer policies should be explained during orientation. Ask volunteers if they have any questions regarding these policies, to ensure they understand and benefit from them.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Criteria 5.2

IDENTIFY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Volunteer Managers are matchmakers. It's part of their job to match volunteers with roles that complement their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Following orientation, these skills should be continually reviewed to identify resources that may help individual volunteers perform at their best.

Volunteers come from different backgrounds, with varying levels of experience. It's important to identify not only their strengths, but also the areas in which they need development. Training and skill development can help to prepare volunteers to fulfil their duties with confidence. Support and development shows volunteers that your organisation is committed to their success.

“Volunteers’ knowledge and skills are reviewed to identify support and development needs.”

– Volunteering Australia.

Recognizing volunteers’ skills, and providing them with new opportunities for growth and development, will enable them to feel valued whilst increasing their retention.



Evidence 5.2: Checklist

Let's take action! How does your organisation identify the support and development needs of your volunteers? Evaluate your current efforts by looking at the Evidence provided by Volunteering Australia:



“Processes are in place to regularly review volunteers’ knowledge and skills in relation to the roles they undertake.”

Is there currently a system in place for regularly reviewing your volunteers’ performance in their roles? How do you assess their knowledge and skills? Is this done formally or informally?

Ensure that you establish processes to routinely check in with your volunteers. Assess where they’re at (with their knowledge and skills), so that you can identify what support and development they may need to feel more confident and capable in their roles.

Remember: Your financial and human resources are precious. Understanding the needs of your volunteers enables you to focus and direct your development efforts.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)



“New roles and development opportunities are offered to existing volunteers where appropriate.”

Are your volunteers given the opportunity to grow in their roles? Are development and training resources available to those who want to advance to a different role?

One of your organisation’s key volunteer objectives should be retention. Creating long-term relationships with volunteers is considerably more time- and cost-effective than recruiting, onboarding, and training new ones regularly. Promote long-term relationships with your volunteers by offering new roles and development opportunities whenever possible.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Volunteers’ knowledge and skills are reviewed when new roles and duties are implemented.”

When you create new volunteer roles and assignments, do you seek new talent, or do you look to your current volunteer base? Do you review the knowledge and skills of your current volunteers to ascertain whether new opportunities may support their goals?

Supporting and nurturing your current volunteer base is critically important to forging long-lasting partnerships. When implementing new roles and tasks, reach out to your volunteers. Evaluate their strengths, needs, and goals, and look for opportunities for growth.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Criteria 5.3

RELEVANT ROLES, TRAINING, & DEVELOPMENT

Once you identify your volunteers' development needs, you must provide them with the resources and opportunities they need to meet them.

Volunteers need ongoing encouragement, guidance, and support. It's your responsibility to equip volunteers with the skills required to perform their roles well and in line with your organisation's needs. This responsibility includes identifying the skills and knowledge required for each role, providing orientation and training, and offering ongoing support, feedback, and instruction.

"Volunteers' knowledge and skills needs relevant to their roles are identified, and training and development opportunities are provided to meet these needs."

- Volunteering Australia.



Evidence 5.3: Checklist

Let's make it happen! Using the Evidence provided by Volunteering Australia, measure your organisation's current development and training resources:



“The organisation’s workforce development planning incorporates the needs of volunteers.”

Does your organisation have a development strategy for its employees? If so, are your volunteers factored into this planning?

During the “Great Resignation” of 2021, a Pew Research Center survey asked employees why they left their jobs. Nearly two-thirds of respondents cited “no opportunities for advancement” as a primary reason. This teaches us a valuable lesson about retention: *People want to grow.*

By incorporating the needs of your volunteers into your development planning, you can help support their growth, retention, and improve their effectiveness.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)



“Where appropriate, volunteers receive practical instruction on how to perform their roles and responsibilities safely and effectively.”

Do your volunteers receive hands-on training to enable them to fulfil their duties safely and successfully? Is this training limited to orientation, or is it ongoing? How often do you provide such instruction?

Volunteers need actionable training from Day 1 onwards. In-depth instruction should take place during orientation. You should also consider creating a process for regular ongoing training, whether it takes the form of (for example) monthly check-ins or quarterly reviews. If you find volunteers consistently asking the same questions or making the same errors, you may want to revise the initial training.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Relevant training and development opportunities are offered to volunteers to meet their knowledge and skill needs for the roles they undertake.”

What knowledge and skills are needed for each volunteer's role? Are there relevant training and development opportunities for volunteers to meet these qualifications? Do they have the resources they need to succeed?

Training and development enables your volunteers to work safely and effectively. Once you have identified the knowledge and skills needed for each role, you must outline the resources to support their development.

Volunteers can benefit from programs like mentoring, workshops, conferences, and e-learning opportunities to build their capacities and improve their performance.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Criteria 5.4

SUPERVISION & SUPPORT

Learning begins with leadership! Volunteer Managers should provide volunteers with the support they need to expand, empower, and enhance the organisation's cause.

Supervision and support can take many forms, including regular check-ins, clear lines of communication, and individual or team discussions. It's important to have a concrete plan for providing support and development to volunteers, so that they feel valued and empowered in their roles, and can effectively contribute to the organisation.

Volunteers may sometimes encounter problems or obstacles and need your support to overcome them. Volunteer Managers create a supportive environment for volunteers by stepping up as their leader.

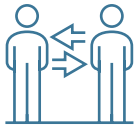
“Volunteers are provided with supervision and support that enables them to undertake their roles and responsibilities”

– Volunteering Australia.



Evidence 5.4: Checklist

Let's get started! Review the Evidence Checklist outlining the principles provided by Volunteering Australia to determine your next action steps:



“Volunteers are assigned organisation supervisors and support contacts appropriate to their role.”

Are your volunteers given a point of contact if they need anything? Are these contacts assigned as the volunteers' supervisors? Do these supervisors have the capacity to provide support when volunteers need it?

Volunteers should be assigned organisation supervisors and support contacts relevant to their positions. Depending on the size of your organisation and volunteer program, this might look like assigning supervisors for specific roles, teams, or departments.

Volunteers should know who their supervisors are, and when and how to contact them. Supervisors should be given the support they need to lead and serve their volunteers.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)



“Volunteer supervision and review is conducted for individual and/or teams of volunteers, matched to the roles.”

Do Volunteer Managers check in and interact with their volunteers? Do Volunteer Managers regularly review their volunteers' performance? Is this done for individual volunteers or for volunteer teams? Are the reviews relevant to the volunteer roles?

Volunteer Managers should be involved in the volunteers' efforts when appropriate. This might look like checking in with volunteers, asking if they need anything, and conducting routine reviews that are relevant to the roles, focusing on the knowledge, skills, and objectives needed for success.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Discussions are held with individual and/or teams of volunteers on achievements and areas for development.”

Do Volunteer Managers hold discussions with volunteers? Do they use this time to acknowledge their achievements and identify any areas of improvement?

These discussions are vital for recognising the needs of volunteers and providing the appropriate resources and support. Open communication between Volunteer Managers and volunteers helps all parties to meet their goals.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Criteria 5.5

CHANGE PROCEDURES

Implementing the National Standards can help your organisation improve and grow. As a result of this growth, it's natural for volunteer involvement to change.

Change is inevitable. By planning for it, you can continually adapt, grow, and evolve with it. You can effectively manage change by creating consistent change procedures. Volunteers may quit, a role may change, or an issue may arise. It's important to have processes in place to manage these situations fairly, consistently, and transparently. Change procedures reduce the risks that come with change and provide support for your organisation as it serves the community.

Changes to the involvement of a volunteer are undertaken fairly and consistently.”

– Volunteering Australia.



Evidence 5.5: Checklist

Let's make a change! Review the Evidence provided by Volunteering Australia below, and identify the steps your organisation can take to implement or improve its change procedures:



“Fair and transparent procedures are in place for changing the role or nature of the involvement of a volunteer.”

How do you currently handle situations where a volunteer's role changes? Do you have clear procedures in place to navigate these situations? Are these procedures fair to both your organisation and to the volunteer? When and how are these procedures communicated to the affected volunteer/s?

Identify potential situations where the role or nature of volunteer involvement may change. Establish fair procedures to manage these situations, and communicate them to your volunteers before they happen. Let them know what may happen in such situations, and how to deal with it.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)



“Fair and transparent procedures are in place for ending the involvement of a volunteer, for whatever reason.”

Do you have standardised procedures for terminating a volunteer's involvement? Do you have standardised procedures to follow if a volunteer elects to leave?

Whether it's your choice or theirs, ensure that you establish clear procedures for ending a volunteer's involvement. To ensure transparency, let volunteers know these procedures ahead of time.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5



“Volunteer performance or misconduct issues are promptly identified, recorded and addressed in line with principles of natural justice.”

Do you have a clear set of rules that volunteers must follow? Do you have a way of identifying performance or misconduct issues that go against these rules? If so, do you record these issues? How do you address them? Are these procedures legal and ethical?

Ensure that all volunteers know of behaviours that may put them at risk of termination or other consequences. These consequences should be fair and appropriate to the issue.

Current Ranking: 1 2 3 4 5

Assessing Your Support and Development Standards

WHAT'S NEXT?

Review your organisation's Current Rankings of each Criteria, using the Evidence Checklist. Identify which Criterion your organisation is proficient in, and which needs improvement. This practice will help to clarify your next step/s forward.

Use this practice to evaluate your organisational strengths and weaknesses:

- What is your strongest Standard 5 Criterion?
- Which Criterion does your organisation need to improve on the most?
- What actions are easiest to implement?
- What actions are the most challenging to implement?







How to Implement Standard 5 to Strengthen Support and Development

What's next?

Providing support and development for your volunteers is crucial for both their success and that of your organisation. It's important to recognise that volunteer support and development is not a one-size-fits-all approach. You may have volunteers from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of experience, and unique learning styles. As such, you should ensure that your support and development processes are designed to take these differences into account, and that they can cater to the unique needs of each volunteer.

In the process, you should ascertain your volunteers' needs, perspectives, and goals regarding their involvement. This will help you determine and deliver the support that they need. Step 6 of Volunteering Australia's 10 Steps to Implementing the National Standards can streamline this process.

Step 6 is to "Promote and communicate the project to key stakeholders." This is an essential Step for large volunteer-involving organisations seeking to implement the National Standards. By following Step 6, you can gain support for your project and get the organisation on the same page.

Step 6: Promote and Communicate

Task 1: Identify Project Stakeholders.

Project stakeholders are the groups, organisations, and individuals who are affected by your project and its results. Your project stakeholders are likely groups or members such as:

- Volunteers and Potential Volunteers
- C-Level Executives
- Senior Management
- Board
- Paid Employees
- Functional Line Managers
- Clients
- Donors
- General Community
- Government
- Media



Task 2: Advise Project Stakeholders.

Once you've identified your project stakeholders, advise them about your National Standards project. Share the project's objectives, strategies, and benefits.

Task 3: Promote the National Standards.

Create an awareness of the National Standards and their importance, particularly among key stakeholders. Consider setting up meetings, face-to-face briefings, workshops, or presentations to promote your project.

Task 4: Gather Volunteer Feedback.

Work with your current volunteer base to evaluate how they're currently managed and supported.

Whether through anonymous surveys, focus group discussions, or interviews, identify the best way to receive feedback that is relevant to the project.

Task 5: Analyse & Share Feedback Results.

Assess this feedback and apply it to your project strategy. Share these results and findings with your key stakeholders when relevant. Ensure you've gathered sufficient feedback before sharing.

Task 6: Share Progress Reports.

Keep your stakeholders updated! Create and distribute progress reports when appropriate to ensure everyone is involved and invested.



Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.